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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8552
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/USDOJ WASHDC PRIORITY
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 09 TOKYO 004803

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CINCPAC FLT/PA/ COMNAVFORJAPAN/PA.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [JA](#)

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(1) Poll: Fukuda cabinet's support rate at 44 PERCENT

TOKYO (Page 2) (Abridged)
October 13, 2007

The approval rating for Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's cabinet was 44.1 PERCENT, according to a public opinion survey conducted for the month by Jiji Press on Oct. 5-8. His predecessor, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, stayed low in public support, remaining below 30 PERCENT, when his cabinet was at its last stage. The Fukuda cabinet's support rate topped the Abe cabinet's. However, the Fukuda cabinet's inaugural support rate ranked eighth among its predecessors since the Ikeda cabinet that came into office in 1960, following the Sato cabinet (in a survey taken in November 1964). The disapproval rating for the Fukuda cabinet was 24.3 PERCENT

The survey was conducted across the nation with a total of 2,000 persons chosen from among men and women aged 20 and over. The retrieval rate was 66.3 PERCENT.

(2) DPJ Ozawa's remark, "Members who do not agree with the ISAF idea should leave the party," creating uproar

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
October 14, 2007

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) President Ozawa earlier said regarding the propriety of his controversial idea of Japan's participation in operations by the international Security Assistance

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Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan: "Those who do not agree with the idea should leave the party." This remark is creating a stir in the party. Now that the main opposition party is launching an attack on the government in the ongoing Diet session over the issue of whether to extend the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean, the party executive is frantically trying to avoid internal discord.

The Ozawa statement cropped up in a press conference on Oct. 10. Secretary General Hatoyama said in a press briefing on Oct. 12: "He

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might have said too much," but he then added: "He did not mean that those who do not agree with the ISAF idea should leave the party. He meant that showing no understanding of the policy platform (the party adopted last December) is contradictory to party decision."

The executive intends to calm down the situation with the explanation that the idea is Ozawa's personal view and that his controversial remark is intended to ask the party members to respect the policy platform.

On the idea of Japan's participation in the ISAF, former DPJ Policy Research Council Chairman Yukio Edano claimed: "It is irrational to say that the participation does not come under the category of invoking state power." Deputy President Seiji Maehara also criticized his United Nations-centered policy, saying: "(The international community) will not be able to take security steps unless China and Russia, permanent members of the Security Council, say 'yes' or abstain from voting."

The party's policy platform also stops short of referring to whether the Self-Defense Force (SDF) or a UN stand-by force separate from the SDF - an idea advocated by Ozawa - should actively join UN activities. One member grumbled: "The current situation has been caused because the party has not fully discussed security policy out of fear of a conflict over policy direction."

Ozawa, when heading the Shinshinto (New Frontier Party), did not come up with any specific policy principles. That was why the party was split and dissolved in the end. Keeping this in mind, a veteran

lawmaker vented: "Mr. Ozawa seems to be showing his classic symptoms." A junior House of Councillors member grumbled: "I might not be able to receive official recognition in the next election. We had better refrain from making unwise remarks."

(3) Former LDP Secretary General Nakagawa: New antiterrorism bill should be enacted in next ordinary Diet session

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
October 14, 2007

In a speech in Higashi-Hiroshima yesterday, former Liberal Democratic Party Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa indicated that the party aims at passing in the next ordinary Diet session the government's new antiterrorism special measures bill to extend the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean. He said: "We should consider the possibility of continuing deliberations on the legislation in the ordinary Diet session (to be convened next January)."

(4) LDP gives in to New Komeito over disclosure of receipts for expenditures from political funds over single yen

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ASAHI (Page 1 (Full))
October 13, 2007

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the New Komeito yesterday held a meeting of the Project Team for Bringing Transparency to Political Funds in the Diet and agreed to disclose receipts for all expenditures. The LDP's previous stance on this issue was that receipts for expenditures exceeding a certain amount from political donations made by individuals, companies and organizations be disclosed. However, it has given in to the New Komeito, which had called for full disclosure. However, since the agreement is attached with conditions, there is a possibility of full disclosure becoming impossible in effect, depending on the course of future discussions.

Both parties will work out such details as a method of disclosing receipts and then finalize bills amending related laws, such as the Political Funds Control Law and the Party Subsidies Law, for submission to the current Diet session. The meeting brought together Tsutomu Takebe, chairman of the LDP Reform Implementation

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Headquarters; Junji Higashi, chairman of the New Komeito Political Reform Headquarters; and others. Participants agreed that receipts for all spending items be disclosed and that such receipts be disclosed in an effective manner with consideration given to the prevention of administrative costs from expanding.

The Internal Affairs and Communications Ministry, which is in charge of the issue, and the LDP noted that full disclosure would lead to a substantive increase in information disclosure work. For this reason, future discussion by the LDP and the New Komeito will likely focus on narrowing in effect items subject to disclosure on the grounds of preventing administrative costs from bloating.

Participants in the Project Team meeting almost unanimously agreed to set up a committee to promote proper expenditures of political funds (tentative name), based on a proposal made by the LDP. Auditing by experts, such as certified public accountants, will likely be obligated. Regarding spending items subject to disclosure, the LDP wants to limit the scope to political organizations involving Diet members, while some New Komeito members want to cover local assembly members as well. Discussions on this matter will continue.

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) has already finalized an amendment to the Political Funds Control Law, which will mandate all political organizations attach receipts for all expenditures. It will submit it to the Upper House possibly next week. Behind the LDP's policy switch is probably that it was motivated by the desire to avoid its members from falling out of

step with the DPJ submitting a bill that is close to the New Komeito's stance.

(5) Ozawa's fund management body to repay all rent income

SANKEI (Page 3) (Full)
October 14, 2007

Democratic Party of Japan President Ichiro Ozawa's fund management body Rikuzan-kai, which is located in Minato Ward, Tokyo, revealed on Oct. 13 that it would return all rent income from condominiums purchased with political funds. Rikuzan-kai will repay S.A. Consulting, a consulting firm, which rented a condominium at 70,000

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yen per month for five years and nine months, the International Grass-Roots Exchange Center, which rented at 200,000 yen per month for three years and one month, and the Tokyo support group for Ichiro Ozawa, which rented at 100,000 yen per month for 11 years and four months. The fund management group will repay the three entities a total of approximately 26 million yen. The fund management body has already repaid S.A. Consulting, which terminated its rent at the end of September of a condominium in Minato Ward.

A spokesperson for Ozawa's office said: "We thought we would rent them free of charge. We think there was no problem. But the media have reported incorrectly, so we decided to repay the money so that we won't be misunderstood."

(6) Maritime interdiction drill held without China, South Korea;
Program's effectiveness needs improvement

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)
October 14, 2007

A three-day maritime exercise called Pacific Shield 2007 to search, pursue, and climb aboard suspicious vessels as part of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) began on Oct. 13 in waters off Izu-Oshima Island, Tokyo. The number of countries taking part in the exercise has increased to seven from the four in 2004, when Japan last hosted the event. Although observers have also markedly increased to 40 countries from the 18, China and South Korea did not join the exercise. This has raised questions about the program's effectiveness.

In principle, the PSI is not intended to deal with any specific situations or countries, the view prevalent in and outside Japan is that the exercise held in Japan effectively has North Korea in mind. In fact, in the wake of allegations that Syria has been pursuing a nuclear weapons program backed by North Korea, US President George W. Bush in September warned North Korea to stop nuclear proliferation. Meanwhile, China and South Korea, which have strong influence over North Korea, opted not to join the ongoing maritime drill, leaving Japan and Singapore as the only countries from East Asia taking part in it and raising questions about regional joint efforts against North Korea. China and South Korea seemingly decided not to antagonize the North, with the six-party talks and the recent inter-Korean summit in mind. A senior Foreign Ministry official said on Oct. 13, "We would like to urge the two countries to join the exercise as observers in the future."

(7) Ruling coalition team decides not to include provision banning refueling oilers in new legislation

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Abridged slightly)
October 13, 2007

The Liberal Democratic Party and New Komeito held on Oct. 12 a meeting of the ruling bloc Antiterrorism Special Measures Law project team, chaired by former LDP Vice President Taku Yamasaki. As a result, the team decided not to include in the envisioned new antiterrorism legislation a provision banning the Maritime Self-Defense Force from refueling foreign supply ships in the Indian Ocean.

The major opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto or DPJ) has

been pursuing the allegation that oil provided by the MSDF to a US

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oiler in the Indian Ocean was diverted for use in the Iraq war. In order to increase the transparency of the refueling mission, the idea of prohibiting the MSDF from providing oil to supply ships was circulating in the government and ruling bloc.

The decision comes from the judgment that banning refueling foreign oilers under the new legislation might be taken as an admission of oil diversion and might end up excessively restricting the activities of other countries as well. To prevent Japanese oil from being used for other purposes, the ruling bloc will consider such steps as (1) Prime Minister Fukuda and others declaring during Diet deliberations on the new legislation not to allow diversion of oil, and (2) specifying measures to prevent oil diversion in a new basic plan on the refueling operation.

In the project team meeting, the New Komieto insisted on setting the term of the new legislation at one year from the viewpoint of civilian control against the option of making it good for two years and requiring annual reporting to the Diet. As a result, the meeting failed to reach a final agreement. The government and ruling camp plan to hold a project team meeting again on Oct. 16 to discuss the contents of the new legislation.

(8) Logbook disclosure needed for accountability on MSDF refueling:
NPO chief

ASAHI (Page 15) (Abridged)
October 4, 2007

Hiromichi Umebayashi, representing the Peace Depot

Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force provided fuel to US naval vessels under the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law. The US military, however, is now suspected of having used the MSDF-supplied fuel for its Iraq operations. The government is aiming to continue the MSDF's refueling mission. Before doing so, however, the government should disclose information about the MSDF's activities so far and fulfill its public accountability.

The suspicion came up in May 2003. Carrier Battle Group 5's Rear Adm. Moffit, who commands the USS Kitty Hawk, a US Navy aircraft carrier, revealed that his flattop was indirectly refueled by the Tokiwa, an MSDF supply ship.

Following up the admiral's remarks, we looked into the Kitty Hawk's logs and other documents, using the United States' information disclosure system. As a result, we found that the Tokiwa fueled the USS Pecos, a US Navy oiler, with about 800,000 gallons on Feb. 25, 2003, and that the Pecos thereafter ran through to the Kitty Hawk and refueled her on the same day. The Kitty Hawk then headed for the Persian Gulf and engaged in Operation Southern Watch (OSW) against Iraq and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Iraq.

At first, the Japanese government explained that the amount of fuel provided by the Tokiwa to the Pecos was 200,000 gallons. However, on Sept. 21, the day after we pointed to the suspected diversion of fuel, the Japanese government owned up to its mistake and corrected the amount thereof to 800,000 gallons-equivalent to the amount of fuel for the Kitty Hawk to consume within a timeframe of about 5-7 days. During that period of time, the Kitty Hawk was deep in the Persian Gulf. She was on stage in waters near Iran, a country that neighbors Afghanistan, where the war on terror is still going on. In

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those days, tensions were growing between the United States and Iran over Iran's suspected nuclear development. In response to the Japanese government's inquiry, the United States says it will look into facts. However, it would be extremely difficult to maintain that the Kitty Hawk was engaged there in the war on terror as well.

We are concerned about whether the diversion of fuel was only for

the Kitty Hawk that day. When standing on the US military's position, there is no reason to separate its warships for operations with an eye on Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran. I wonder how Prime Minister Fukuda and his government will dispel such a natural suspicion.

In the long run, information disclosure to the public will heighten the quality and credibility of administration. Unfortunately, the government has been failing to make us feel that it is serious enough to consider such an advantage.

We made our information disclosure request to the United States. At the same time, we also requested the then Defense Agency to disclose MSDF vessels' logbooks to the public. However, the agency, now the Defense Ministry, did not disclose them, with the exception of only some publicly known information, such as when they left port and when they returned to port. The agency cited some points as reasons for its rejection of our request to disclose information, fearing that such information disclosure could make it difficult to ensure safety and could trouble Japan's relationship of mutual trust with other countries. We raised an objection to the agency, with copies of US naval vessels' logs attached. We asserted that the agency should not reel off theoretical possibilities that are low in probability. Yet, the agency did not change its conclusion.

The United States--the main player in the war on terror--disclosed its naval fleet logs. That is probably because it is self-evident that terrorists can neither locate naval vessels nor attack them accurately and rapidly. At that time, the Defense Agency cited a sort of vague fear as a reason for its refusal to disclose information. This is nothing but to show authoritarianism or secrecy in old days. In other words, the government thinks it would be better to let us know nothing. Logbooks that record the Self-Defense Forces' overseas activities are historical documents, which are valuable for future researchers as well. They should not be shredded even after the retention period of archives.

(9) Japan, North Korea to unofficially meet in China to determine details for next session of working group on diplomatic normalization possibly later this year

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Full)
October 14, 2007

Japanese and North Korean officials in charge of negotiations on normalizing bilateral diplomatic ties arrived in Shenyang, China, on Oct. 13. The officials are expected to determine a timetable and agenda items for the next session of the working group on normalizing diplomatic ties to be held as part of the six party talks possibly later this year. Reflecting the Fukuda administration's emphasis on dialogue with the North, North Korea leader Kim Jong Il has indicated his stance of carefully watching moves by the Japanese government. The focus of attention is on to what extent progress will be made on negotiations on the issue of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korean agents.

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Working-level negotiations on normalizing bilateral relations, outside the framework of the six-party talks, will be held for the first time under the Fukuda administration. The officials who arrived in Shenyang include Foreign Ministry North and East Asian Division head Shigeo Yamada and Ambassador of North Korea to Normalization Talks with Japan Song Il Ho. No specific schedule, including how long the talks will last, has been determined yet.

In the negotiations, Japan and North Korea are expected to reconfirm the need to accelerate talks on settlement of past accounts, including Japan's colonial rule over the North, in line with the abduction issue. Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura has indicated a positive stance of tackling the issue of liquidation of the past.

However, Pyongyang has taken no specific move to resolve the abduction issue, whose settlement is vital for Japan. In the working group meeting held in early September, Japan urged the North to return all abducted Japanese nationals and clear up the details of

the issue. But North Korea declined Japan's request, one official remarking: "Since Japan-North Korea relations have been deteriorated, we are not in a state of taking more steps."

In the upcoming talks, too, it remains to be seen whether Pyongyang would respond to Japan's request for a reinvestigation on Japanese abduction victims.

(10) North Korea tells US that delisting it as state sponsor of terrorism and Japan-North Korea relations are separate issues

ASAHI (Page 1) (Full)
Eve., October 13, 2007

Washington, Kei Ukai

North Korea does not consider improvement in its relations with Japan as a condition for the United States to delist it as a state sponsor of terrorism, a source familiar with North Korean affairs revealed on Oct. 12. The North has also insisted that if it is not delisted by the end of the year, it will discontinue the nuclear disablement process. Therefore, there is a possibility of Japan-North Korea relations preventing the nuclear disablement process.

According to the source, Pyongyang asserted that since Japan-North Korea relations and US-North Korea relations are completely separate issues, the two issues should not affect each other and that the six-party talks will stall if the US insists on improvement in Japan-North Korea ties as a condition for delisting. The Japanese government, meanwhile, has called on the US government not to remove the North from its list of state sponsors of terrorism before the abduction issue is resolved.

The six-party agreement released on Oct. 3 specifies that the US will live up to its promise in accordance with North Korea's response based on an accord in the working group of normalizing diplomatic ties between the US and North Korea. US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, US chief negotiator, stated: "I

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have clearly said that I want to see improvement in Japan-North Korea relations." This highlighted that there is a gap between Washington and Pyongyang on the agreement of the working group.

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The expectation is that the nuclear disablement process will speed up based on the agreed document. Georgetown University Prof. Victor Cha, former director for Asian affairs of the National Security Council, pointed out: "Delisting will be very difficult unless there is improvement in the abduction issue," since President George W. Bush, who will make a final decision, is sympathetic about the issue.

(11) Japanese, Chinese governments in coordination on visit to Japan by President Hu; Prime Minister Fukuda likely to visit China in January

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
October 14, 2007

The governments of Japan and China are coordinating a visit to Japan by Chinese President Hu Jintao in mid-April, it was learned on Oct. 13. Tokyo and Beijing have determined that it will be desirable for Hu to visit Tokyo after Japan's Diet completes deliberations, approving a state budget for fiscal 2008. It will be the first time for a Chinese president to come to Japan since then President Jiang Zemin visited in 1998. Prime Minister Fukuda, however, will likely visit China in January before an ordinary Diet session convenes.

Former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori and Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao agreed in their meeting in September in Beijing to set a schedule for Hu's Japan visit in the next spring. The two governments, therefore, have been under coordination.

The expectation is that Hu will stay in Japan for five to seven

days. The Chinese government is looking at the possibility of the president visiting Japanese local areas.

The topics of discussion in the Japan-China summit will likely include 1) Japan's cooperation for China's energy conservation and environmental protection; 2) trade and investment issues, including intellectual property protection and food safety; and 3) macroeconomic policy such as the handling of the Chinese yuan. The Japanese side intends to ask the Chinese side for its cooperation for a settlement of the abductions of Japanese by North Korea.

A visit to Japan by a Chinese president has been a pending issue due to a conflict over the remarks made by the Emperor when Jiang visited Japan, as well as over the Yasukuni Shrine issue in the government of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

(12) Prime minister orders drastic review of independent administrative corporations: Gets down to work of consolidation and rationalization plan before year's end

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)
October 13, 2007

The government and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) yesterday decided to drastically review the organizations of all of 101 independent administrative corporations and their operations with an eye on the compilation of an independent administrative corporations consolidation and rationalization plan slated for the end of the year. Though basic policy guidelines for revising such corporations were adopted at a cabinet meeting in August by the Abe administration, moves of various government agencies that have jurisdiction over them have been slow. The LDP Administrative Reform Promotion Headquarters will strengthen efforts at the order of Prime

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Minister Yasuo Fukuda.

Receiving a report on Oct. 11 on the envisaged compilation of the plan from Koki Chuma, chairman of the LDP Administrative Reform Promotion Headquarters, and Hiroyuki Sonoda, Acting Chairman of the Policy Research Council, in the Diet, Fukuda replied, "It is necessary to take a second look at independent administrative organizations."

At the prime minister's order, the LDP Administrative Reform Promotion Headquarters will conduct a hearing survey of all independent administrative corporations and fully look into the outcome of the survey with the possibility of abolishing some of their administrative works and projects or privatizing them.

The government's Administrative Reform Promotion Headquarters yesterday started inviting public views on its website on the sale of projects by independent administrative corporations to the private sector. State Minister in Charge of Administrative Reform Yoshimi Watanabe indicated a plan to reflect public opinions in the envisaged consolidation and rationalization plan.

The government and the LDP are now seriously tackling a review of independent administrative corporations partly in order to counter the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto), which has the initiative in adopting bills in the Upper House. The DPJ advocates abolition or privatization in principle of all independent administrative corporations within three years.

However, the basic guidelines for independent administrative corporations adopted by the government at a cabinet meeting will likely meet fierce resistance from various government agencies, because it stipulates that all independent administrative corporations with the exceptions of those that are considered really necessary be scraped.

(13) Poll: 92 PERCENT see need for newspapers

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Abridged)
October 14, 2007

The Yomiuri Shimbun recently conducted a face-to-face nationwide public opinion survey, in which respondents were asked if they thought they needed newspapers to get information or knowledge. In response to this question, a total of 92 PERCENT answered "yes" or "yes to a certain degree." Respondents were also asked if they trusted newspaper reports. To this question, a total of 87 PERCENT gave affirmative answers with "very much" or "generally."

There are an increasing number of new information-gathering resources like the Internet. Even so, the general public heavily weighed the role of newspapers as reliable media. The survey was conducted on Oct. 6-7, prior to Newspaper Week (Oct. 15-21).

In the survey, respondents were further asked if they thought newspapers have been careful not to violate human rights or privacy in their reports. In response, 73 PERCENT answered "yes." Asked about TV news reports, 46 PERCENT answered "yes."

SCHIEFFER